

Municipality of Tavarnelle Val di Pesa

**Working Papers on the Protected Natural Area  
of Badia a Passignano**

**THE PROTECTED NATURAL AREA OF  
BADIA A PASSIGNANO**

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*Nature, including the wildest of types, also hides its commonplaces. Among those who live on our land and those who come to discover it with their backpacks and trekking equipment, there is a tendency to think that the woods of the Chianti region are mainly inhabited by wild boars and roe deer, undoubtedly two of the most common mammals, but not the only ones that consider the climate, geographic location and characteristics of the Chianti ecosystem as the best habitat where to settle and reproduce. There is such a complexity of animal and plant species tied to biodiversity, and this represents one of the most significant traits of the protected natural area of Badia a Passignano, one that plays host to many different species with their various calls in the total 364 hectares that make up the natural heritage of Badia a Passignano and Poggio al Vento. A perfect balance where the past lives in harmony with modern times. History, evidenced by the deep bond with an illustrious resident, Saint Giovanni Gualberto who, more than a thousand years ago, took care of those woods, unique spaces where to pray, cultivating nature and the spirit, is also retraced through the presence of what is left of various rural buildings of medieval origin that belonged to the ancient organisation of the Vallumbrosan monks. This was founded by the saint who was actually Italy's first environmentalist, and who today protects the State Forestry Corps of our peninsula. The present is life in the woods, life that is born, that develops and proliferates in the rich ecosystem that is deeply rooted in the protected natural area of Badia a Passignano. A mosaic of lives, a union of micro worlds that allow us to discover, for the first time, the presence of animals which are rare and of considerable scientific and preservation interest, such as the garden dormouse, the hazel dormouse and the lesser spotted woodpecker. A particularly heterogeneous biodiversity that also includes, as far as the flora is concerned,*

*special species that speak about the past of Badia and of how, many years ago, the climate here was less temperate, featuring characteristics of environments similar to those found on the Apennines. In this sense, the most evident sign is represented by the presence of the Orange Lily and of the Laburnum, a flower and a tree, respectively.*

*These are some of Nature's treasures that the local population as well as the visitors will be able to find out about thanks to the project aimed at enhancing the value of the protected natural area of Badia a Passignano, promoted by the Municipality of Tavarnelle. Our goal is to enhance, preserve and protect this area, already valuable as it is, opening it to visitors so that they can enjoy it more and furthering knowledge about it from the standpoint of nature, environment, history and culture, with special focus on students. This is a project which the Municipality intends to develop through a set of actions and measures aimed at encouraging the diffusion of that which, in 2008, was set up by the Municipal Council as a Protected Natural Area of Local Interest (in Italian, ANPIL). An important milestone of this project will be the release of the first issue of a series of publications that describe the peculiar characteristics of the local territory under different profiles. The publication will take stock of the work carried out so far in collaboration with a team of university experts, and it is part of a broader value-enhancement initiative. It is a tool that bets on promoting the territory of the protected area of Badia through a network of trails and paths equipped with information systems, boards, maps and instruments that make it possible for visitors to gain in-depth knowledge of the historic-cultural and natural landmarks found at the various locations. Nature, territorial and landscape heritage intertwine one with the other and become a precious opportunity of cultural growth for the entire community, as well as a drive for the promotion of sustainable, responsible and high-quality tourism. It is not a common place but rather an unusual, unique place where to make room for ideas, aspirations, or for our most intimate callings. In this case once again, History, the one that Saint Giovanni Gualberto lived through and contributed to creating, is a master in this.*

The Mayor  
*David Baroncelli*

*Antonello Nuzzo*

**All that.....Badia a Passignano is a Protected Natural Area of Local Interest (ANPIL)**

### **A Protected Natural Area of Local Interest in Tuscany**

Tuscany's regional law "Rules regarding parks, natural reserves and protected natural areas of local interest" (no. 49/1995, implementing the state's framework law on protected areas no. 394/1991), provides for the establishment of Protected Natural Areas of Local Interest (also referred in this document as ANPIL) as a Township initiative as the first and simplest level of local commitment for the "conservation and enhancement of the environment, the landscape, the historical-cultural and natural heritage" in close connection with the "promotion of compatible production activities, recreational activities, scientific research, spreading of environmental information and fauna management".

The specific nature of this type of areas, a novelty in the national framework, allows them to be identified in anthropic environments, in moderately-sized areas, in natural monuments or in urban and suburban green areas. They can comprise conservation or renovation measures and the restoral of the original environmental characteristics. They can also represent a first level of enhancement and protection of specific resources and an initial step towards the recognition of a special regime: a starting point for a possible evolution of management activities in more targeted organisational forms, such as natural reserves, or complex ones such as provincial parks.

During the fifteen years of management of the aforementioned regional law, this type of protected area has become quite common. In the 11<sup>th</sup> official list of Tuscany's protected natural areas, drawn up in 2009, there are 59 local areas, set up on the initiative of 66 townships, with a concerned surface area of 93,000 hectares, larger than the overall surface area of the existing reserves and regional and provincial parks.

In accordance with the procedure in force, the proposal concerning the Protected Natural Area of Badia a Passignano was included in the 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Programme for Protected Natural Areas 2004/ 2007. The protected natural area was then established at the same time as the approval of the Rules through Municipal Council resolution no. 46 of 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2008. The ANPIL was included in the Official List of Regional Protected Areas starting from its tenth update, when the 5<sup>th</sup> Programme 2009/2011 was approved.

### **Why set up a Protected Area in Badia a Passignano.**

From the Municipal Strategic Plan and Urban-planning Regulations, one can easily infer the assumptions that justify the idea of setting up a protected natural area of local interest. These assumptions lie in the important landscape and historic-cultural aspects, identity-makers of the territory in question, which combine and integrate themselves with the values of flora and fauna of regional and European Community interest.

The establishment of the ANPIL does not entail an adaptation of the Plan or of its regulations, already sufficiently explicit, but instead allows its contents to be developed, seizing the

additional opportunities offered by the acknowledgement of the special status regime of protected area, according to the specific regional and national order on the subject. Moreover, it does not die out within a strictly local sphere, but constitutes instead a first operational fulfilment for work orientations involving a large area, something that has been discussed for quite some time by the municipalities of Siena's and Florence's Chianti region, for sustainable use of the land in agriculture and, generally speaking, for the protection and enhancement of that rural territory and of its environmental, landscape, historical-cultural and economic-social resources that have been well known for a long time now due to their importance.

The nature of ANPIL, proposed and accepted for Badia a Passignano by the 4<sup>th</sup> Regional Programme, today makes it possible to start the testing of a first municipal initiative, which may be extended inter-municipally to territories and landscapes with similar characteristics.

### **Where is the ANPIL of Badia a Passignano**

The built-up complex of the Badia represents the ideal and tangible centre of the protected area on which the historical and cultural values that are already known and have been the object of study and research for some time now focus. They concern both the monumental part and the surrounding rural property, to the centuries-old evolution of which the current landscape identity of the locations is attributed.

The perimeter of the ANPIL submits a total of 364 hectares to the Management Regulations. Of these 364 hectares, 204 comprise the monumental complex and are classified as having a prevalent historical-natural interest, with no hunting allowed in this area. These are supplemented by an additional 160 hectares on the side, classified as having a prevalent historical-panoramic interest.

This initial perimeter, which kicks off the management phase of the protected area, includes woodland and farmland in which the nature, fauna and flora-related characters are associated with cultivation practices with highly qualified productivity, which form a context that is considerable in terms of the landscape, in sync with the historical-cultural importance of the Badia.

The roads, trails, farmland and rural buildings within the perimeter, measured and classified according to Urban-planning Regulations in force, make up a basic structure of the area in order to monitor the current situation and ensure a good level of accessibility, tourist accommodation and service to the residential and production functions.

### **Which ANPIL for Badia a Passignano**

It should be remembered that the Municipal Strategic Plan, the Urban-planning Regulations and the Building Regulatory Plan are the tools that define how much can and has to be done within the perimeter of the protected area for urban-planning, landscape and building aspects. Moreover, the ordinary management activities of the landscape, forestry and hydrogeological limitations complete the normative framework for the landscape, the environment, and sustainable use of the land in agriculture.

The ANPIL's Regulations became effective at the same time as the establishment of the

protected area. These are a positive and stimulating contribution that specifies what to do in order to ensure the achievement of the institutional purposes, with the protection and, most importantly, the qualification of values identified within the environment, the local territory and the landscape.

The objectives of safeguarding and preserving the natural and historical-cultural resources typical and specific of the protected area must be guaranteed by:

- the performance of detailed studies and surveys and the spreading of any acquired knowledge;
- the recovery and reclamation of degraded areas in the cases in question, restoring the naturalness in particular situations;
- the overall prevention of possible uncontrolled transformation, of a reversal to a wild state and of negligence through environmental vigilance as well as through adequate and constant maintenance.

The objectives of enhancement and promotion must be developed:

- by taking advantage of the consolidated know-how and by implementing it through research, teaching, environmental education and specific cultural initiatives;
- through the offer and orientation of recreational opportunities and leisure time activities, hiking, chances to visit the area's specific resources;
- through the promotion and qualification of farm products, tourist-farm initiatives, a diffused hospitality which is consistent with the appeal of the natural and landscape identity of the context.

In order to pursue its institutional goals, the ANPIL organisation shall take into account any funds offered by the system policies implemented at the national, regional and provincial level on the topic of protected areas, also seizing any available co-funding opportunities.

### **A Perspective for Managing the ANPIL**

In the orientation formalised in the Rules for the conservation and enhancement of the area's identity-making resources, the managerial and operative perspectives concern particularly oriented choices of municipal responsibility in which the current start phase necessarily distinguishes itself from the full management phase, especially as regards the promotional commitment.

Nevertheless, the areas of operation of the public initiative and the choice of public and private partners to be activated in terms of participation and sharing of the responsibilities remain constant and common to the two phases.

### **The Areas of Operation**

The areas of operation with top priority are those of knowledge pertaining to the consistency and degree of preservation of natural and historical-cultural resources: until today, these topics were handled separately but they should be considered jointly in terms of their effect on the territory and on the landscape, attested through the centuries by the presence of the Badia and of the Vallumbrosan community. The organisation and spreading of knowledge,

together with their differentiated use within the areas and during the seasons, shall constitute a further work orientation that must be supplemented by the commitment to promote local products.

### **The Municipality's Partners**

The local residents and operators are identified as the favoured partners of the municipal initiative, to be turned into leading players jointly responsible for the outcome of the management, the first ones to guarantee the preservation and maintenance of identified resources. They are joined by scientific-cultural institutions and associations in general, from environmental associations to hunting associations: operational references for the implementation and qualification of the initiatives. Lastly, the monastic Vallumbrosan community for the central nature, not just in physical terms, of Badia's monumental and archive heritage in the whole of the commitments to make operational.

### **The Reference Territory**

Both the areas of operation and the partners that the Municipality has to get involved will have to range towards a large and variously defined inter-municipal area, according to the cases and the topics to be dealt with, since the unavoidable need for integration and system policies, the base of a positive outcome of specific initiatives undertaken in the field of protected areas, is taken for granted by now.

The ANPIL of Badia a Passignano qualifies itself as the first operational and managerial initiative to be used:

- within the scope of a hypothetical protected area of Florence's and Siena's Chianti region;
- in the possible aimed application of the Charter for the sustainable use of Chianti's farmland;
- in the formalisation of a landscape area of acknowledged characterisation to be transferred to landscape planning at the regional, provincial and local level being currently defined.

### **The Consulting and Proposing Bodies**

According to the Regulations, the start of the managing activities entails as a top priority commitment the establishment of the consulting and proposing bodies, in the differentiated functionality of the Scientific Committee and of the Management Committee. The choice of members to be appointed for the two bodies and their necessary qualification shall constitute the chance for initiating the relationship between the ANPIL and those who will be the external partners to be favoured, not only at the local level but also within the framework of a vast area: environmental, cultural and sports associations, economic and leisure time categories; the Didactic Department; the Vallumbrosan community and the Forest and Environment Observatory of the St. Giovanni Gualberto Foundation; the Centre of Historical Studies of the Chianti region; the Chianti Classico Consortium; the University of Florence and the University of Siena.

## **The Projects**

The choice of adequately qualified collaborations will make it possible to initiate, through assignments and agreements, a first campaign of studies and research for censuses, cataloguing activities and detailed lists of the natural, archaeological and historical resources as a base for the overall management of the area and its subsequent monitoring, for the start of teaching and cultural activities in general and for the preparation of documentary and disclosing material, in both electronic format and hard copy.

The priority commitments also include one that concerns the visibility of the ANPIL vis-à-vis the potential users through signs accompanied by tables that indicate the Protected Natural Area's borders and accessibility to places of natural, historic and landscape interest and to the trails, possibly thematic, that can be used immediately including through agreements with private owners.

Although as a temporary measure and through external authorised collaborations, the opening of a Visitor's Centre on site, with the necessary materials and tools, will represent a must reference and service point as a venue for the institutional activities, for the guiding of the visits and for initial information on seasonal availability.

*Giovanni Maffei Cardellini*

## **When the Saints Go (Went) marching in: a Look between Buildings and Itineraries**

*No historian can talk about the Florentine countryside without mentioning the famous Abbey of Passignano, in Val di Pesa, which holds thousands of parchments that represent one of the most exploited treasures of the Florence State Archive. Passignano is situated in the southern region of the Florentine countryside, near the most travelled road in ancient times and in the early Middle Ages, between Val d'Elsa and the upper Arno valley. After the transformation of communication routes, in other words just before the year 1300 and during all the following centuries, the area found itself inside one of the more isolated and difficult-to-access regions of Florence's domain. Indeed, none of the large communication routes built afterwards passes by Passignano. Today, you can reach it by means of paths that cross huge uninterrupted forests, while on the southern side of one of the spurs of the Sillano hills, towards the River Pesa, along a small stream called Rimaggio, there is the Abbey, an imposing and solitary fortress. The hill on the other side of the Rimaggio stream is still covered by forests to this day: there are a few houses on its top, what is left of the castle of Poggio al Vento. (...)*

*The current huge and threatening monastic structure is a fortress that takes up the entire surface of the old castle. The few houses under its northern side are what is left of the large medieval village, while the forests are for the most part the result of the monks' care and attention after they managed to become the owners of the Passignano and Poggio al Vento castles as well as of their districts, due to their tenacious "owner policy" that lasted for centuries.*

This description is taken from a well-known and important study conducted by Johan Plesner and published in the 1930s, then translated and reprinted in Florence in 1979. This study focuses on a territory and a historical-landscape context that matches the one indicated in the

original cadastre of 1939, one of the bases for understanding the places, the transformations and the permanent elements. By reading the maps, one can take a trip back in time, useful as a reference in order to establish the maintenance and renovation policies of the territory that will have to qualify the presence of the ANPIL. The papers and images that can be compared, replicated herein, represent significant moments: the cadastre of 1825, when the Vallumbrosan property reached its maximum extension, the IGM (Military Geographic Institute) map of 1878, after the unification and the suppression of religious orders, the original cadastre of 1939, with the new ownership structure, the GAI aerial photographs of 1954, a time of crisis for sharecropping, and the current images. An analysis of the papers and of the images confirms continuity in the territorial layout and a certain reserve which slowed down transformations that, in other cases, have changed the Chianti landscape. It has only been in recent times that modifications have occurred which were produced by opposing phenomena: on the one side, a tendency to abandon the fields, the wooded areas or rural buildings and, on the other side, increased interest due to the industrialisation of cultivations (vines), which changed the layout of the tiles of this mosaic-like landscape. Moreover, with the tourist-residential re-utilisation that leads to a privatisation of the countryside, with fences and divisions of the plots of land, resulting from the transformation of the rural dwelling, associated with work in the fields, into the isolated home of an urban class. The increase in real estate units tended to duplicate the model of the detached house (villetta or small villa). At times, it entailed a change in the building components, generally to go along with a stereotyped idea of the Chianti region that originates out of the Chianti region itself, with vernacular interpretations of gutters, openings, arches, finishes. These are all aspects with regard to which the ANPIL's presence can play a positive role in terms of controlling and stimulating, in order to integrate more economic activities and to identify objectives of a general interest, shared and useful for the maintenance or preservation of the places and of the property heritage.

The Cadastre of 1939 confirms a period of particular balance between nature and use of the land. In addition to using it to enhance the value of the starting description, as a historical/literary reference, we also used it to identify the historical buildings and landscape marks: the paths, the religious and the rural settlement. It is also a suggestion for a governance and design method that does not aim at transformation but rather at the maintenance and renovation of the territory.

In 1832, before it was dismantled due to the suppression of religious orders and the sale of the abbey in 1870, the Vallumbrosan property had reached a total surface area of 653 hectares organised into 24 farms, which were under the governance of Passignano, and 14 farms under the governance of Poggio al Vento. At the time, the woods took up 70% of the territory, the pastures 5%, while the remaining 25% was taken up almost entirely by arable land with vineyards and olive groves. In the post-World War II period, the territory was still organised in a similar fashion, with the woods covering 64% of the territory, 2% covered by pastures and the remaining 34% by arable land - mostly vineyards and olive groves.

The landscape admired by the Dane, then, was very similar to the one created by the Vallumbrosan monks through a long process, started in the Early Middle Ages, that led to the subdivision of the territory into farms, to the wide diffusion of wooded areas and to the introduction of tree cultivations (olive groves and vineyards in rows) with terraces and

irrigation systems for the slopes.

The ANPIL's perimeter identifies the heart of the Vallumbrosan system that, as already mentioned, revolved around the two main centres of Passignano and Poggio al Vento; it consists of completely wooded slopes and areas with traditional agricultural activities. Altogether, the perimeter area measures about 364 hectares, 260 of these, equal to 71%, are wooded, while 67 hectares, equal to 18%, are cultivated with vineyards and olive groves. A landscape that keeps its own distinct peculiar nature and identity with respect to the surrounding area, along with a strong consistency with the traditional layout, that only now is at risk of being subjected to transformations which must be adequately controlled, as mentioned previously.

The area of the ANPIL obviously includes the Badia a Passignano and Poggio al Vento, as well as various rural complexes that belonged to the ancient Vallumbrosan organisation of medieval origin. Tower homes that develop vertically with a simple structure, a square or rectangular plan, with accurate wall claddings made of chiselled stone slabs, arranged in small rows. At present, the towers are usually incorporated in farmhouse complexes that have been subjected to renovations and changes over time. Already with the growth of sharecropping between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries, the towers were flanked by other buildings distributed in a horizontal direction, featuring a rectangular plan, two stories high, with walls made of different size stones, and a double-pitched roof. The actual living quarters were on the first floor, while the ground floor was used to store the farm tools and to house the animals. With the spontaneous and continuous growth in modern times, the volumes juxtaposed and intersected one with the other, arranging themselves around the more ancient central nucleus, with subsequent additions and adaptations. Generally over multiple stories, at times with a pigeon tower, loggias and external staircases. The windows and doors are rectangular in shape and usually larger than the previous ones; the walls are made of stone mixed with bricks, often plastered, while the roofs are double-pitched. During this period, masonry annexes were built detached from the main body, further developing the organisation of the building complex. There were also homes built during the Lorraine age, designed according to indications provided by the architects from the Grand Ducal administration or according to more classical aesthetic tenets inspired by Buontalenti's villas, simplifying them. These buildings feature a regular and compact plan and hip roof. The geometry of plastered walls prevails, punctuated by the orderly arrangement of the windows and, at times, by one or more loggias. The spaces are larger and feature a rational distribution, with the living quarters on the first floor, the large kitchen usually on the ground floor where, obviously separate from the kitchen, the animal quarters can also be found, along with storage rooms for tools and rooms to work (which generally replace the open loggias), access to which is provided by large doors. Because of their architectural simplicity and clarity, they are the ones subjected to the greatest transformations.

The farm atlas contains a significant wealth of cultural and architectural interest.

**Badia a Passignano:** walled castle, the main local landmark, with the Abbey of San Michele, full of important frescos, where San Giovanni Gualberto died and was buried. The monastery was home to the college of the entire Congregation (not at Vallombrosa) and it is where many general chapters were held during which the institutional structure of the entire order was

defined. An important religious building is the Church of San Biagio, built during the medieval period and attended by the village's residents, with Renaissance frescoes discovered during the renovation jobs carried out at the end of the nineteenth century. After 1870 the property was sold to private individuals, who arranged for the building of many neo-gothic additions. After 1986 the Vallumbrosan monks managed to take back ownership of the Badia. The bibliography provides additional information for a more in-depth knowledge.

**Poggio al Vento:** important fortified castle/hamlet built during the Middle Ages when it carried out territorial governance and defence functions, thanks to its strategic position on a hillcrest that provided a wide view of the landscape. Over the years, it turned into a rural settlement where the convent's farmers lived. The urban layout is maintained, with the Church of Sant'Andrea, now used for non-religious purposes, and well-preserved examples of a worker's medieval home.

**Calcinaia:** rural complex made up of multiple homes and outbuildings, of medieval origin. It is of great interest for the volumetric aggregation which, exploiting the morphological characteristics of a sloping ground, forms a small and close-knit hamlet with common spaces and staircases at different levels, around which different volumes juxtapose and intersect one with the other. The whole is completed by detached rural homes located in relation to their various productive functions.

**Pogliano, or Pugliano:** rural complex of medieval origin, with a rectangular plan to which volumetric additions were made afterwards that arrange themselves to form the work spaces, following, when necessary, the morphological characteristics of a sloping ground, in a harmonious set. There is a plaque in remembrance of the birth of the painter Domenico Cresti, known as "Il Passignano": a painter with good skills who worked in the Badia and in the Church of San Michele from 1598 until 1602.

**Cetinale:** rural building organised in multiple volumes, of medieval origin. It is of considerable historic-documentary interest due to the characteristic tower type and the subsequent development with volumes that juxtapose and intersect one with the other, arranging themselves around the oldest central nucleus.

**Podere Monte:** rural complex of medieval origin, of significant interest due to the particular type of complex and now in a state of abandonment, with subsequent add-ons, linear structure, juxtaposed or separate annexes that define the work area and the farmyard.

**Morandello:** rural building from the sixteenth century, with a nearby chapel with rectangular plan, double-pitched roof and a facade rich in details with side volutes, built in 1598 on the order of the Abbot of Passignano.

**La Selva:** rural complex of medieval origin, with buildings with a rectangular plan, two stories high, with double-pitched roof, renovated as a tourist-farm.

**Capannole:** rural building from the Lorraine age.

**Vignola:** rural building of medieval origin, of the in-line type and with rectangular plan.

**Castelrotto:** Lorraine-age rural building from the late eighteenth century with a regular and compact plan, elegant symmetrical facade and hip roof. It is located at a site with archaeological findings dating back to the Roman age, where it is presumed the guard tower for the main medieval road called “del Guardingo di Passignano” was located. It has been recently renovated, and it is a perfect example of an adjustment to current taste and functions.

*To find out more*

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[www.tavarnellevp.it/areanaturale](http://www.tavarnellevp.it/areanaturale)

#### **Websites on environmental, territorial and landscape planning and the Protected Natural Areas:**

[www.minambiente.it](http://www.minambiente.it)

[www.regione.toscana.it](http://www.regione.toscana.it)

[www.provincia.fi.it](http://www.provincia.fi.it) - [www.cittametropolitana.fi.it](http://www.cittametropolitana.fi.it)

[www.parks.it](http://www.parks.it)

#### **CAPTIONS OF IMAGES AND TABLES**

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